

Mitch Kidd's Sermon for October 2, 2025
The Blessing of the Animals

I'll never forget the day I met Mario. I was working with one instructor and one apprentice instructor and the apprentice was the one who got to introduce me to Mario. She told me all about him and I took his leash in my hand expecting him to jump all over me and be as excited as I was. Truth be told, Mario did none of those things. He simply sniffed at me and then started sniffing the floor. I showed him his bed and he sniffed that too. He listened well enough but I couldn't help but envy my classmates who came to dinner with stories about how their dogs had cuddled with them during the afternoon. Mario was not going to give me his heart so quickly.

The next day was a different story. It was the first time I would put Mario's harness on and walk with him. In that moment, it was as if Mario suddenly realized that this was what he had been working towards all along. After that first walk, I got my first glimpse of Mario's big heart. He wagged and licked and got really excited. I'd been so worried that Mario didn't want me before that first walk. Little did I know that he simply takes a while to give his heart away.

Animals touch our lives in so many ways. Some animals are our faithful companions, some work with and for us and others live in the wild providing many opportunities for us to learn from them. Now more than ever, it is important for us to figure out ways in which to work and live alongside animals and nature. Too often, scriptures such as the Genesis scripture we read today are interpreted to mean that we have power over the animals and that we can subdue our planet and all the creatures that call earth home. I prefer to think of us working together as good stewards and finding ways to work together. Even though so much of the evidence points in a hopeless direction, I will always believe that there is hope for our planet and for working together. If we would only listen to the animals and the trees. They have so much to teach us if we would just stop to take notice.

St. Francis of Assisi had a deep love and respect for all creatures. Blessings of the animals started after his death first to bless farm animals that were so important for well-being and then to bless all animals who enrich our lives.

All of the wonderful animals who are present with us today have their own special purpose in their people's lives. Animals often become part of the family and yes, this is true for working animals like Mario. Mario is a very important member of our household and his needs matter. It is also important today to remember those animals who are no longer with us but who hold a special place in our hearts. I'm thinking about Libbie and Josetta who preceded Mario as my guide dogs. The grief I felt when losing them was very real. When we lose our beloved animal companions, we need to take time to grieve and to remember them.

As we gather together today, let us take time to reflect on all of the ways in which animals touch our lives whether they be pets, animals known to us or wild animals we have never met.